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UNCLAS HARARE 001139

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/PDPA DALTON, MITCHELL AND SIMS AND AF/S RAYNOR

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION MASS ACTION IN ZIM; HARARE

- ¶1. Under headline "What next after mass action?" the independent daily "The Daily News" dedicated its June 5 editorial to challenging the leadership of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) to "come up with an imaginative and focused plan that can save Zimbabwe" from the current socioeconomic and political tragedy. The call comes in the wake of a week-long strike called by the MDC that has successfully shut commerce and industry during the last three days, despite government threats to punish companies that failed to open. Excerpts:
- ¶2. "Zimbabweans, who stayed away from work this week to demonstrate their anger at the government's mismanagement of the country, will wake up next Monday to find themselves facing exactly the same problems which have killed their nation. . . But most significantly, President Robert Mugabe will not have resigned or conceded that he has failed to run Zimbabwe and agreed to negotiations with the MDC, the stated objectives of the opposition party's mass action. If anything, Zimbabweans can expect Mugabe terrified into action by the huge success of this week's stayaway to come out fighting to shore up his tottering regime. Having called upon Zimbabweans to make the sacrifices that they made this week, with many arrested or beaten up in public by State security agents, we ask MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai: what next now? Does the opposition party. . . have any alternative and viable plan beyond mere mass stayaways to free Zimbabweans from this dictatorship. . . ? In as much as the mass action this week is a sign that the government has run out of options beyond brute military force, it is also a wake-up call to Tsvangirai and the MDC to strategize beyond stayaways and to always have an alternative plan should the first one be thwarted by the besieged government. . . The opposition party must rapidly get its act together and come up with an imaginative and focused plan that can save Zimbabwe now and not to prolong the crisis. . . ."

SULLIVAN